

The Sound of People Learning to Make Music

I've sung at the Capitol only once, so far,
and the day that I did, they chose to sing
Amazing Grace. Somehow, our circle
started off in two different keys,
and even more surprising—or maybe not—
we persisted in that difference to the end,
the mingled atonality creating its own
earthly unearthly human music, lifting
up into the dome, to be replicated exactly never.

Some laughed it off, others got out the pitch pipe,
but the sound of people learning to make music
has never bothered me, maybe because
I grew up in a music-filled house, and we
were always honking, squeaking, strumming
and pounding, trying our hands and breath in new
combinations, beginning again.

So it doesn't bother me now, when my son
pulls out his viola, or my daughter her ukulele,
the warm-ups and scales, rehearsal and process, tents
and manifestoes, are all just part
of the open-ended art of getting it wrong
in order to get it right, somewhere in this
not quite aimless, not quite tuneless wandering.

—Sarah Busse

